E/CONF.39/C/466
SUMMARY

21 Nov.1962

ENGLISH
ORIGINAL : FRENCH

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE APPLICATION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE LESS DEVELOPED AREAS

SUMMARY

Agenda Item: C.4.3

Madagascar

SISAL IN MADAGASCAR : PROBLEMS OF ITS CULTIVATION AND THE RESULTS OBTAINED BY THE MANDRARE SISAL RESEARCH CENTRE

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Engineer, I.R.C.T.

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SISAL IN MADAGASCAR
PROBLEMS OF ITS CULTIVATION AND THE RESULTS OBTAINED BY THE MANDRARE SISAL RESEARCH CENTRE

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With the exception of the Morondava region where approximately 700 hectares are now devoted to the cultivation of sisal and there is every possibility of this figure being raised to approximately 3,000 hectares by the end of the sixties, sisal production is concentrated in the Mandrare Valley where 18,500 (and a probable future 20,000) hectares are devoted to its cultivation. In 1961 13,500 metric tons of sisal were produced and this figure may well reach 16,000 metric tons in 1962 and 18,000 metric tons in 1963 if labour continues to be available at the present rate.

In order to ensure further progress, the sisal industry (which plays a large part in the agricultural economy of Madagascar) must pay greater attention to intensified cultivation and the productivity of the labour force rather than to extending the areas under cultivation.

The I.R.C.T. Sisal Research Centre at Mandrare was set up in 1951 in order to study the problems created by the development of the sisal crop. The Centre had four main objectives:

- to study ecological data for the sisal areas;
- to analyse the production and productivity factors of the sisal industry;
- to solve the special problems which occur within the framework of a given rate of development;
- to study the possibility of conversion to some other type of crop in the event of the situation in the sisal industry becoming unfavourable.

As regards the first objective, the general soil surveys have been completed and a rain gauge network installed. Evapotranspirometric surveys are to be undertaken.

From the point of view of the Centre's second aim, important results have been obtained from experiments in the following fields:

Soil preparation

Vegetable matter for planting

Maintenance of nurseries

Density and spacing

Maintenance of plantations and method of operation.

Conclusions concerning non-organic manuring will be available in 1963; surveys of the physical evolution of the soil are now being conducted.

The Centre's third aim is to conduct special surveys concerning:

Planned operation

The supervision of material

The supervision of yields.

Finally, there is an irrigated plot which is being used for the study of the behaviour of fibrous plants and other crops in the Mandrare Valley.

In conclusion, the results obtained make it possible to envisage an increase in the sisal yield without calling for a corresponding increase of the area devoted to the product. A yield of 25,000 metric tons might well be hoped for once the balance of plantations reaches the stage at which the industrial potential can be brought to this figure and at which the labour required for this development is available.

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